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# The New Oxford American Dictionary

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very: I'm awfully sorry to bother you so  
by nice again.  
unpleasantly: we played awfully.  
will | adv. for a short time: stand here

English *âne hwiile* '(for) a while.'

adverb awhile (we paused awhile) should  
one word. The noun phrase, meaning 'a  
, esp. when preceded by a preposition,  
often as two words (Margaret rested for a  
e there in a while). See also usage at

whirl | adj. [predic.] in a whirl; whirling: her  
girl with images.

awkward | adj. 1 causing difficulty; hard to  
h: one of the most awkward jobs is painting  
awkward questions | the wheelbarrow can  
maneuver.

liberally unreasonable or uncooperating  
damned awkward! | please excuse my  
e's at an awkward age.

causing embarrassment or inconvenience:  
in a very awkward situation.

or graceful; ungainly: Luther's awkward  
ed his progress | she was long-legged and

able or abnormal: make sure the baby isn't  
an awkward position.

ES awkwardly adv.; awkwardness n.

Middle English (in the sense 'the wrong  
upside down'): from dialect *awk* 'back-  
e, clumsy' (from Old

turned the wrong way')

period of ad-  
marked' by self-  
and moody behavior.

small pointed tool used  
les, esp. in leather.

English *æl*, of German  
related to German

botany a stiff bristle, esp.  
rowing from the ear or

y, rye, and many grass-

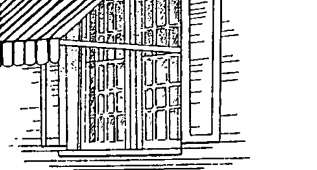
ES awned adj.

English, from Old Norse *eggr*; related to  
Danish *avn*.

NG | n. a sheet of canvas or other mater-  
n a frame and used to keep the sun or

front, window, doorway, or deck.

17th cent. (originally in nautical use);  
origin.



awning

past of AWAKE.

vökan | past participle of AWAKE.

| adj. [predic.] Military absent from where  
but without intent to desert: the men

OL | humorous now the parrot has gone

Os: acronym from absent without (official)

adv. & adj. away from the appropriate,  
expected course; amiss: [as adv.] many

ces go awry | [as predic. adj.] I got the in-  
something was awry.

normal or correct position; askew: [as  
was hatless, his silver hair awry.

Middle English: from A-<sup>2</sup> 'on' + WRY.

pl. [attrib.] informal (of a personal quality or  
deprecating and shy: his aw-shucks nice-  
is conniving nature.

20th cent.: from AW + shucks (see

axe) | n. 1 a tool typically used for chop-  
usually a steel blade attached at a right an-  
n handle.

■ figurative a measure intended to  
reduce costs drastically, esp.  
one that involves elimination of  
staff: thirty workers are facing  
the ax in the assembly depart-  
ment.

2 informal a musical instrument,  
esp. a jazz musician's saxophone  
or a bass guitar.

v. [trans.] 1 end, cancel, or dismiss  
suddenly and ruthlessly: the com-  
pany is axing 125 jobs | 2,500 staff  
were axed as part of the realignment.

■ reduce (costs or services) dras-  
tically: the candidates all  
promised to ax government spend-  
ing.

2 cut or strike with an ax, esp. vi-  
olently or destructively: the door had been axed by the  
firefighters.

PHRASES have an ax to grind have a self-serving rea-  
son for doing or being involved in something: she joined  
the board because she had an ax to grind with the school  
system.

ORIGIN Old English *æx*, of Germanic origin; related  
to Dutch *aks* and German *Axt*.

axel | 'æksəl | (also Axel) | n. Figure Skating a jump with  
a forward takeoff from the forward outside edge of one  
skate to the backward outside edge of the other, with  
one and a half turns in the air.

ORIGIN 1930s: named after Axel R. Paulsen (1885-  
1938), Norwegian skater.

axenic | 'a:zənik; 'a:zən- | adj. chiefly Botany of, relating  
to, or denoting a culture that is free from living organ-  
isms other than the species required.

DERIVATIVES axenically | -ik(ə)lɪ | adv.

ORIGIN 1940s: from *a-* 'not' + Greek *xenikos* 'alien,  
strange' + -ic.

axes | 'æks, sɛz | plural form of AXIS.

axial | 'æksɪəl | adj. of, forming, or relating to an  
axis: the main axial road.

■ around an axis: the axial rotation rate of the earth.

DERIVATIVES axially | adv.

axil | 'æksəl | n. Botany the upper angle between a leaf  
stalk or branch and the stem or trunk from  
which it is growing.

ORIGIN late 18th  
cent.: from Latin *axilla*

'armpit' (see AXILLA).

axilla | 'æksɪlə | n. (pl.  
axillae | -sɪlə) | Anatomy

the space below the  
shoulder through  
which vessels and  
nerves enter and leave  
the upper arm; a per-  
son's armpit.

■ Botany an axil.

ORIGIN early 17th cent.: from Latin, diminutive of  
*ala* 'wing.'

axillary | 'æksə, lɪrɪ | adj. Anatomy of or relating to the  
armpit: enlargement of the axillary lymph nodes.

■ Botany in or growing from an axil: axillary shoots. Of-  
ten contrasted with TERMINAL.

axillary bud | n. a bud that grows from the axil of a  
leaf and may develop into a branch or flower cluster.  
Also called LATERAL BUD.

axiom | 'æksɪəm | n. a statement or proposition that  
is regarded as being established, accepted, or self-  
evidently true: the axiom that supply equals demand.

■ chiefly Mathematics a statement or proposition on which  
an abstractly defined structure is based.

ORIGIN late 15th cent.: from French *axiome* or Latin  
*axioma*, from Greek *axiōma* 'what is thought fitting,'  
from *axios* 'worthy.'

axiomatic | 'æksɪə, mætɪk | adj. self-evident or un-  
questionable: it is axiomatic that dividends have to be  
financed.

■ [attrib.] chiefly Mathematics relating to or containing ax-  
ioms.

DERIVATIVES axiomatically | -ik(ə)lɪ | adv.

ORIGIN late 18th cent.: from Greek *axiōmatikos*,  
from *axiōma* 'what is thought fitting' (see AXIOM).

axi-ON | 'æksɪ, ɒn | n. Physics a hypothetical subatomic  
particle postulated to account for the rarity of process-  
es that break charge-parity symmetry. It is very light,  
electrically neutral, and pseudoscalar.

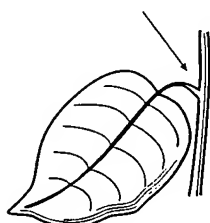
ORIGIN 1970s: from AXIAL + -ON.

axis | 'æksɪs | n. (pl. axes | -sɛz) 1 an imaginary line  
about which a body rotates: the earth revolves on its axis  
once every 24 hours.

■ Geometry an imaginary straight line passing through  
the center of a symmetrical solid, and about which a  
plane figure can be conceived as rotating to generate



ax 1



axil

the solid. ■ an imaginary line that divides something  
into equal or roughly equal halves, esp. in the direc-  
tion of its greatest length.

2 Mathematics a fixed reference line for the measurement  
of coordinates: the variable that is thought of as a cause  
is placed on the horizontal axis, and the variable that is  
thought of as an effect on the vertical axis.

3 a straight central part in a structure to which other  
parts are connected.

■ Botany the central column of an inflorescence or  
other growth. ■ Zoology the skull and backbone of a  
vertebrate animal.

4 Anatomy the second cervical vertebra, below the atlas  
at the top of the backbone.

5 an agreement or alliance between two or more coun-  
tries that forms a center for an eventual larger group-  
ing of nations: the Anglo-American axis.

■ (the Axis) the alliance of Germany and Italy  
formed before and during World War II, later ex-  
tended to include Japan and other countries: [as adj.]  
the Axis Powers.

ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin, 'axle,  
pivot.'

axis deer (also axis) | n. a deer that has lyre-shaped  
antlers and a fawn coat with white spots, native to In-  
dia and Sri Lanka.

■ Cervus axis, family Cervidae.

ORIGIN early 17th cent.: axis from Latin, the name of  
an Indian animal mentioned by Pliny.

axi-sym-metric | 'æksɪs, mɛtrɪk | adj. Geometry sym-  
metrical about an axis.

axle | 'æksəl | n. a rod or spindle (either fixed or ro-  
tating) passing through the center of a wheel or group  
of wheels: [as adj.] axle grease | axle loads.

ORIGIN Middle English (originally axle-tree): from  
Old Norse *axlir*.

axman | 'æks, mæn | (also axeman) | n. (pl. -men) 1 a  
person who works with an ax: he was like an axman at  
work in a tangled thicket.

2 informal a rock or jazz guitarist.

ax-min-ster | 'æks, mɪnstə | (also Axminster carpet)  
| n. a kind of machine-woven patterned carpet with a  
cut pile.

ORIGIN early 19th cent.: named after the town of  
Axminster in southern England, noted since the 18th  
cent. for the production of carpets.

axolotl | 'æksə, lɒtl | n. a Mexican salamander which  
in natural conditions retains its aquatic newtlike larval  
form throughout life but is able to breed.

■ Ambystoma mexicanum, family Ambystomatidae.

ORIGIN late 18th cent.: from Nahuatl, from *atl* 'wa-  
ter' + *xolotl* 'servant.'

axon | 'æks, sən | n. the long threadlike part of a nerve  
cell along which impulses are conducted from the cell  
body to other cells.

DERIVATIVES axonal | 'æksənəl; 'æks, sənəl | adj.

ORIGIN mid 19th cent. (denoting the body axis):  
from Greek *axōn* 'axis.'

axo-neme | 'æksə, nɛm | n. Biology the central strand  
of a cilium or flagellum. It is composed of an array of  
microtubules, typically in nine pairs around two single  
central ones.

DERIVATIVES axo-nemal | 'æksə, nɛməl | adj.

ORIGIN early 20th cent.: from Greek *axōn* 'axis' +  
*nēma* 'thread.'

axo-nometric | 'æksənə, mɛtrɪk | adj. using or des-  
ignating an orthographic projection of an object, such  
as a building, on a plane inclined to each of the three  
principal axes of the object; three-dimensional but  
without perspective.

axo-plasm | 'æksə, plæzəm | n. Biology the cytoplasm  
of a nerve axon.

DERIVATIVES axo-plas-mic | 'æksə, plæzmɪk | adj.

Ax-um variant spelling of AKSUM.

ay | i; a | exclam. & n. variant spelling of AYE.

Aya-cu-cho | 'i;ə, koo'cho | a city in the Andes in south  
central Peru; pop. 101,600.

ayah | 'i;ə | n. a native maid or nursemaid employed  
by Europeans in India.

ORIGIN Anglo-Indian, from Portuguese *aia* 'nurse,'  
feminine of *aio* 'tutor.'

aya-huas-ca | 'i;ə, 'huəskə | n. a tropical vine native to  
the Amazon region, noted for its hallucinogenic prop-  
erties.

■ Genus *Banisteriopsis*, family Malpighiaceae: several species,  
in particular *B. caapi*.

■ a hallucinogenic drink prepared from the bark of  
this.

ORIGIN 1940s: from South American Spanish, from  
Quechua *ayawaskha*, from *aya* 'corpse' + *waskha*  
'rope.'

Aya-tol-lah | 'i;ə, tɒlə | n. a Shi'ite religious leader in  
Iran.

ORIGIN 1950s: from Persian, from Arabic *'āyātun-  
llāh*, literally 'token of God.'

Aya-tol-lah Kho-me-ni see  
Ayck-bourn | 'æk, bɔrn |, Sir  
playwright. Notable plays: *Re-  
Abund Person Singular* (1973)  
*proval* (1985).

aye! | i; | (also ay) | exclam. archa  
assent; yes: aye, you're right ab

■ (aye, aye) Nautical a respon-  
der: aye, aye, captain. ■ (in v  
vor say, "aye."

■ n. an affirmative answer or a  
House was divided: Ayes 211, N

PHRASES the ayes have it the  
majority.

ORIGIN late 16th cent.: prot  
personal pronoun, expressing

aye<sup>2</sup> | a; | adv. archaic or Scottis  
PHRASES for aye for ever. I  
for aye.

ORIGIN Middle English: fr  
lated to Latin *aeonum* 'age' and  
'aeon.'

aye-aye | 'i; i; | n. a rare no  
mate allied to the lemurs. I  
teeth and an elongated twig  
with which it pries insects fr

■ *Daubentonia madagascariensis*, t  
ily Daubentoniidae.

ORIGIN late 18th cent.: fr  
iay.

Ayer | er |, Sir A. J. (1910-  
full name *Alfred Jules Ayer*. E  
ponent of logical positivis  
guage, Truth, and Logic (19  
Knowledge) (1956).

Ayers Rock | er; z; er; | 'dɔ:z |  
ern Territory, Australia, sou  
The largest monolith in the v  
m) high and about 6 miles  
Aboriginal name ULURU.

Ayeshah | 'i; ʃəh | the wife o  
Aymara | 'i; mɔ'rɔ | n. (pl.  
member of a South Americ  
ing the high plateau region  
Lake Titicaca.

2 the language of this peopl  
adj. of or relating to this peo  
ORIGIN Spanish.

Ayrshire | 'er; ʃɜ; -ʃɜ; | ►  
white breed of dairy cattle.

ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: n  
mer Scottish county where

AYT | abbr. Computing inform (i  
A-yub Khan | 'i; ʃəb | 'kɔ  
(1907-74), Pakistani soldie  
1958-69.

Ayurveda | 'i; ər, vɔ:də; -  
Hindu system of medicine,  
of balance in bodily syste  
treatment, and yogic breath

DERIVATIVES Ayurvedic  
ORIGIN from Sanskrit *āyur*,  
AZ | abbr. Arizona (in official  
Azzad Kashmir | 'i; ʒɔ:d kɔ:  
mous state in northeastern  
Kashmir; administrative ce  
established in 1949 after K  
of the partition of India.

ORIGIN from Urdu, litera  
azalea | 'i; ʒɔ:lə | n. a dec  
the heath family with clu  
sometimes fragrant flower  
rhododendrons, azaleas are  
than most other rhododend

■ Genus *Rhododendron*, family  
ORIGIN mid 18th cent.: i  
feminine of *azaleus* 'dry,' b  
in dry soil.

azan | 'i; ʒɔ:n | n. the Musli  
ically made by a muezzin  
mosque.

ORIGIN mid 19th cent.  
nouncement.' Compare wi

azeo-trope | 'i; ʒə, trɒp | ►  
liquids that has a constant  
tion throughout distillation

DERIVATIVES azeo-oti-  
pik | adj.

ORIGIN early 20th cent.:  
zein 'to boil' + tropos 'turn

Azer-baijan | 'i; ʒɔ:b, bɪ |  
southeastern Europe, in th  
shore of the Caspian Sea  
Baku; languages, Azerbaij